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ABSTRACT

This paper offers three experiental assessment procedures for speaking/listening competencies. First, five important elements in assessing speaking and listening are presented: defiinition; the establishment of a specific purpose for the assessment; determining what is being measured; identifying the type of communication being assessed; and a standardized or acceptable means of quanityfing what is being assessed. Maintaining that it is precisely because of these considerations that experiential assessment is a natural choice for speaking and listening skills, the paper then presents experiential assessments for presentational listening, presentational speaking, and interpersonal communication listening skills. For each of the three assessments, the paper describes the criteria for assessment of the competency, lists the skills the competent communicator will have, and presents the assessment procedure and a rating sheet. (Fourteen notes are included and an appendix contains a script used in the interpersonal listening skills assessment.) (SR)

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ASSESSING SPEAKING/LISTENING COMPETENCIES THROUGH EXPERIENTIAL ACTIVITIES

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Assessing Speaking/Listening Competencies
through Experiential Activities
by Bob Bohlken

"Assessment" of speaking/listening skill competencies is a growing issue in education today. Van Rheenen and Halliday Casmir report that the number of states which have assessment of speech and listening skills at the secondary school has doubled since 1981, and currently 72% of the states surveyed have identified speaking/listening skills and either have or are developing a statewide assessment of these skills.[1] Often, however, we attempt to assess without considering five important elements.[2]

The first consideration in assessing speaking and listening is not to become embroiled in theoretical arguments about definitions of speaking and listening and where each process begins and ends in regard to critical thinking and memory.

The second consideration is the establishment of a specific purpose for the assessment. Is the instrument used intended to measure the communicator's achievement in regard to others, or is it intended to measure self-improvement? Is it intended to demonstrate communication competency or communication skill effectiveness? Or, is the instrument intended to evaluate a course or program effectiveness in order to improve in instruction? The standardized tests appear to attempt to fulfill a variety of purposes.

The third consideration is determining what is being measured. Does the instrument stress the measurement of knowledge? Does it measure performance of a skill? If it does, which skill--language or processing or communicating? Or does the instrument measure motivation--the desire to complete a task?

The fourth consideration is the identification of the type of communication being assessed. Does the instrument consider interpersonal, intrapersonal, group, presentational or mass communication? Is the medium the message or at least an influence on the message?[3]

The fifth consideration is a standardized or acceptable means of quantifying that which is being measured. Is a five or seven point scale most reliable? Or, is it a matter of "pass" or "fail"?

It is because of these considerations that experiential assessment is a natural for determining language skills competencies, especially in speech and listening. The experiential approach can be adapted to meet the needs of the assessor if standardized rubric and objectives are established. The experiential approach can be adapted to meet the needs of an assessor. The most reliable standardized instrument for measuring communication competency is the "Communication Competency Assessment Instrument,"[4] but it does not meet the criteria we establish for communication competency. It uses contrived situations, and it is expensive.

First, let us establish our definition of competency. Without qualification we define competency as demonstrations of effectiveness, credible performance, appropriate language, knowledge, skill and motivation.[5]

Second, our purpose for assessment is to determine if college sophomores have the speaking and listening skills to continue their academic program and establish a field of study which requires proficient language skills in presentational speaking, presentational comprehension and interpersonal listening and responding.

Third, through the experiential assessment technique we are measuring the application of knowledge of language and skill of processing through performance. We are not involving paper/pencil tests to determine written knowledge. Knowledge will be demonstrated by the performance.

Fourth, for our purposes we present three competency experiences: (1) presentational listening experience, (2) presentational speaking experience, (3) interpersonal listening/responding experience

Fifth, we choose to use a five-point rating scale and determine that a mean score of three or higher as indicates competency. The individual items are not to be interpreted individually, but only as part of the whole for the sake of reliability. We choose this rating means on the reliability of the SPEAK Test[6] and SCA Test.[7] We derive a mean score of 2.5 as competent in regard to each purposeful experience.

Experiential Assessment of Presentational Listening

Our first competency to be assessed is the skill of listening to a lecture or presentation. The competency criteria were chosen from SCA guidelines (see SCA guidlines appendix), the criteria of "The Brown-Carlsen Listening Comprehension Test,[8] The Watson-Barker Listening Test,[9] The Kentucky Comprehensive Listening Test[10] and the National Teacher Examination.[11]

The competent listener will have the following skills:

1. The competent listener will demonstrate non-verbal attending skills by eye-contact/referent, nodding/facial expression, note taking.

2. The competent listener will state verbally the thesis or main idea of the ten minute presentation.

3. The competent listener will state verbally upon prompt after lecture both the speaker's and listener's purposes for the communication.

4. Upon prompt, the competent listener will demonstrate verbally the understanding of the speaker's organization or relationship of ideas.

5. The competent listener will demonstrate verbally the comprehension of the message by asking three relevant questions about the message.

6. Upon prompt, the competent listener will demonstrate comprehension by paraphrasing the lecture (may use notes).

7. Upon prompt, the competent listener will demonstrate verbally the types of support used in the lecture (statistics, testimony, comparison, example).

8. The competent listener will demonstrate inferences made from the material presented and attitude toward listening by nonverbal behavior or demeanor.

9. The competent listener will demonstrate awareness of opinion statements by verbally restating examples from the lecture text when prompted to do so.

Procedure: The lecturer tells the listener that the lecture about to be given is a facsimile of a classroom lecture and that he/she should do whatever he/she does in the classroom. The lecturer, who is familiar with the script, reads the ten minute message at a rate of 130 words per minute. Upon completion of the lecture, the lecturer announces that he/she will ask some questions about the material just presented and that the listener may use his/her notes (if notes were taken) if he/she wishes while answering the questions orally.

Prompt questions after lecture presentation.

1. First, what was the main idea or thesis of the lecture?

2. What was my purpose for sharing this information and your purpose for listening?

3. What organization or sequence pattern was used?

4. Please ask me, the lecturer, three questions about the material just presented.

5. What testimony, examples, statistics or comparisons were used in the message?

6. What is your attitude toward classroom lecture's message that you just listened to, and what conclusions did you draw in relationship to your own listening in the classroom?

7. I made some comments in the lecture that are opinions; please tell me what they were.

8. Think a minute and please put into your own words as much of the message that you can remember.

Evaluation: Evaluation is based on a video tape of the listener during the lecture and question/answer period.

Each of the responses for the items above is to be evaluated on the basis of 1 to 5 as indicated on rating sheet. One (1) signifies "little or no response," and five (5) signifies fulfillment of the task requested.

Rating Sheet for Lecture Listening

1.	Listener indicated attending	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Listener demonstrated understanding of the main idea	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Listener demonstrated understanding of the speaker and own purposes	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Listener demonstrated recognition of organization used	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Listener asked three relevant questions	1	2	3	4	5
6.	Listener demonstrated awareness of support used	1	2	3	4	5
7.	Listener established attitude	1	2	3	4	5
8.	Listener recognized opinions	1	2	3	4	5
9.	Listener's paraphrase of the message (number of relevant content words fluently spoken)	1	2	3	4	5

total
' divided by 9 = mean
2.0+ demonstrates competency

Experiential Assessment of Presentational Speaking

The criteria for assessing presentational speaking were chosen from "Communication is Life: Essential College Sophomore Speaking and Listening Competencies"[12] and "Achieving Communication Competence Through the Basic Course: The Oshkosh Plan."[13]

The competent presentational speaker will have the folowing skills.

1. The competent speaker will introduce and conclude the presentation through relating topic with audience and self.

2. The competent speaker will declare purpose and thesis or main idea of the message.

3. The competent speaker will use supporting material of comparison, testimony, statistics and example.

4. The competent speaker will demonstrate an organization sequence-time, space, topic, cause-effect, problem-solution and use it consistently.

5. The competent speaker will be fluent--limited (fewer than four verbal pauses and phrases: "you know").

6. The competent speaker will use acceptable pronunciation. (Pronunciation that does not call attention to itself.)

7. The competent speaker will use appropriate eye-contact and facial expression congruent with the message.

8. The competent speaker will use appropriate and effective vocabulary and grammatical useage.

9. The competent speaker will demonstrate knowledge, motivation and caring about audience, speaker and message relationships--be communicative.

Procedure: The candidate is presented an abstract drawing of symbols (see example) and is given ten minutes to develop a two to three minute speech describing his/her perception. The candidate may choose to describe and relate two or more of the symbols represented. The candidate is told that he/she is expected to present an organized message from an established perspective using supporting material and delivered in a credible manner.

Rating Sheet for Presentational Listening

1.	Appropriate introduction and conclusion	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Development of concept (length of speech)	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Established an expressed purpose	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Used supporting material (number of examples, quotes, statistics, comparisons)	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Established and consistently used sequence organization (time, space, topic, problem/solution or cause/effect)	1	2	3	4	5
6.	Was fluent -2 disfluencies or verbal pauses -1	1	2	3	4	5
7.	Used appropriate pronunciation	1	2	3	4	5
8.	Appropriate eye contact/referent and congruent facial expression, gestures, movement and use of visual aid.	1	2	3	4	5
9.	Appropriate language usage	1	2	3	4	5
10.	Communicativeness	1	2	3	4	5

total
divided by 10 = mean score
2.0+ demonstrates competency

Experiential Assessment of Interpersonal Communication Listening Skills

The criteria for interpersonal communication skills were developed in part from "Achieving Communication Competence Through the Basic Coursse: The Oshkosh Plan."[14] This particular assessment experience emphasizes listening in a learning interpersonal context.

The competent interpersonal communicator will have the following skills.

1. Demonstrates interest in and caring about the relationship of communicator #1, message, communicator #2
2. Recognizes purposes for communication
3. Asks open ended questions for clarification
4. Self discloses opinions toward material and other communicator
5. Paraphrases other's statements
6. Recognizes facts from opinions
7. Recalls other's statements and summarizes
8. Responds verbally to questions asked (number of multi word answers)
9. Responds non-verbally during interaction (facial expressions, eye contact, movement)

Procedure: The candidate will engage in a scripted conversation which will be videotaped for evaluation of the following criteria. The script (see attached script) contains necessary prompts.

Rating Sheet for Interpersonal Communication

1.	Responds to open-ended questions with multi-word responses	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Uses eye contact/reference, facial expression, audiable cues and body movement demonstrationg attending and responding	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Asks questions for clarification about other communicator's statements	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Paraphrases and summarizes what other communicator says	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Responds to questions distinguishing facts from opinions	1	2	3	4	5
6.	Responds with information about message and other communicator	1	2	3	4	5
7.	Verbalizes purposes for communication	1	2	3	4	5

total
divided by 7 = mean
2.0+ demonstrates competency

Endnotes

1. Dwayne Van Rheenen and Mina Halliday Casmir "The Status of State Practices in Speaking and Listening Skill Assessment: 1981-1990," Paper presented at 1990 Speech Communication Association Convention, Chicago, IL.

2. Phil Backlund, J. Gurry, K. Brown, and F. Jandt "Recommendations for Assessing Speaking and Listening Skills," Communication Education, Vol 31, No. 1, January 1982 pp 9-18.

3. Shelly Hinck, Onlee Bowden, William Dailey "So What are You Listening To," Paper presented at Central States Communication Association, 1990.

4. Rebecca Rubin "Communication Competency Assessment Instrument," Paper presented at Speech Communication Association, 1982.

5. Richard Quianthy, Communication is Life, Richard Quianthy, Project Director Speech Communication Association, Annandale, Virginia, 1990, p. 17.

6. SPEAK Test, Educational Testing Service, Princeton, NJ, 1987.

7. Rebecca Rubin, "Communication Competency Assessment Instrument," Speech Communication Association, 1982.

8. "The Brown-Carlsen Listening Comprehension Test," World Book Company, 1955.

9. Watson-Barker Listening Test Video Version, SPECTRA Communication Associates, New Orleans, LA, 1987.

10. The Kentucky Comprehensive Listening Test, Kentucky Listening Research Center, 1980.

11. K.W. Watson, "The ETS Listening Model," Paper presented at Speech Communication Association Convention-New Orleans, LA, 1988.

12. "Communication is Life: Essential College Sophomore Speaking and Listening Competencies," Speech Communication Association, Annandale, VA, 1982.

13. "Achieving Communication Competence Through the Basic Course: The Oshkosh Plan," Paper presented at the Central States Communication Association, Detroit, April 7, 1990.

14. Ibid.

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Experiential Assessment of Interpersonal Listening Comptencies

Experience: A structured, cued interpersonal interview--both participants seated at 12/3 axis at a distance of 2 feet. The interview should be audio recorded for analysis of verbal replies. The interviewer should count visual non verbal cues on paper during interview.

Hi, I am Prof _____. (rise to shake hands) I see by the information card that you are [_____]. (note nonverbal or response 1 point) Do you mind if I call you _____? (verbal or nonverbal response 1 point) The purposes of this interview are to share information on listening in the classroom lecture and for me to learn more about your listening skills.

First of all, I need to tell you or remind you that there are four essential elements in classroom lecture listening. (1) the purposes for listening (2) preparing to listen (3) attending or clozing and (4) responding. Are you familiar with those terms or do you have questions? (1 point per question)

There needs to be a purpose or purposes for all communication events. _____, (1 point eye contact) do you recall what I said are the purposes for this interview? (1 point for each of the 2 purposes)

_____, (1 point eye contact) from my past experiences, I believe, and others agree with me, that the effective student listeners in a classroom have to have a specific purpose for listening to the lecture. Do you think having a specific purpose for classroom listening is a fact or opinion? (2 points for opinion) From your past classroom experiences, can you remember

the class that you listened most effectively? (eye ref. 1 point) What was the subject? (response 1 point) In that [history] class, that you listened effectively, what was your purpose? (responses 2 points) Now _____, (1 point eye contact) think about the class you listened least effectively, (1 point for eye reference) Did you have a purpose and what was the purpose or were you indifferent to the material presented? (1 point for each five word verbal response)

In the class you listened most effectively, you probably had some knowledge about the subject and an interest in relating the information to yourself. You were prepared mentally, physically and emotionally. Of the three preparation elements I just mentioned, how would you rank order them in regard to importance? (1 point for each element mentioned; 1 point if question is asked or repeat requested) How do you prepare to listen to a classroom lecture? (1 point for each five word unit response considering the elements above)

_____, (1 point eye contact) we can listen to and comprehend a speaker speaking at a rate of 380 word per minute whereas the average speech rate is 220 words per minute. Do you think that this statement is a fact or opinion? (1 point for 'fact' response) Since we know a listener can comprehend much faster than a speaker can speak, the listener needs to attend by

clozing or anticipating what the speaker is going to say.

_____, (1 point eye contact) do you think you listen best when you know something about the topic being presented? (1 point for each 5 word unit response or 1 point for question about specifics)

Do you (1 point eye contact) know, an effective classroom lecture listener not only has to have a purpose, be prepared and attend or cloze the message, s/he must also respond verbally and nonverbally. When in a classroom lecture where you respond by taking notes, how do you take notes? (1 point for question or each 5 word unit answer) In a classroom lecture do you ask the lecturer questions? If so what kind of questions do you ask? (1 point each 5 word unit and/or question) Do you and the lecturer have eye contact often? (1 point per 5 word response)

_____, (1 point eye contact) do you have any questions about our interview? (2 points for each relevant question asked)

Will you please paraphrase or tell me in your own words the main ideas we have just discussed? (1/2 point for each appropriate content word--words other than articles, conjuctions and prepositions)

There are 30+ potential points. I am assuming that (70%) 21 points will be basic competencies.